

1.0 Background

Feasibility Analysis

Erie County owns and operates an interconnected series of waterfront recreational facilities along the Niagara River. These facilities, located in the Riverside neighborhood of Buffalo, New York, include Cornelius Creek Park, Ontario Street Boat Launch and a section of the Riverwalk multi-use trail. The declining physical condition of these facilities combined with unrealized recreational potential for the site led the Black Rock - Riverside Good Neighbors Planning Alliance to prepare a Concept Plan for improvements to the facilities. Per the community concept, the facilities would be collectively called Black Rock Canal Park.

In the fall of 2007, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning requested proposals for an analysis of the feasibility of the Concept Plan. peter j. smith & company, inc., a multi-disciplinary landscape architecture and urban planning firm was selected to lead the Feasibility Analysis. The scope of the Feasibility Analysis includes a physical inventory of site conditions, evaluation of the Concept Plan, recommendations for alternative design features, a phasing plan for implementation, and preparation of New York State Environmental Quality Review documents.

Planning Process

Landscape architects from the firm of peter j. smith & company, inc. led the Feasibility Analysis, working closely with the project Steering Committee and the volunteer Advisory Committee. Members of the Feasibility Analysis' Steering Committee represent agencies that have a role in the project's funding and scheduling or in the park's maintenance. The Steering Committee provided direction on contractual requirements, project scope, schedule, maintenance, funding, and other business-related issues. The Advisory Committee was made up of members of the Black Rock Canal Park Steering Committee, a community group that prepared the Concept Plan for the park, in addition to members from the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Niagara Greenway Commission and members of this Feasibility Analysis' Steering Committee. The Advisory Committee provided input on the park, its design components, and the feasibility analysis process. See Chapter 5 for a list of committee members and their affiliation. The feasibility analysis process included eight Advisory Committee meetings and three Steering Committee meetings, as well as meetings with and interviews of other stakeholders and agencies who operations and/or decisions may affect the design or implementation of the park.

The design process started with an interactive input session with the Advisory Committee members; the input session invited feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed Concept Plan. A draft vision statement, guiding principles, and project goals were also presented to the Advisory Committee for their review and feedback. From there, the Concept Plan was evaluated based on criteria that reflected the vision, guiding principles and project goals.

Based on the evaluation, as well as inventory of site conditions and relevant local/regional planning documents, the project landscape architects made recommendations for alternative design features and produced a plan for initial implementation. Cost estimates for the design and construction of the park, summaries of best management practices and construction requirements, and a listing of potential funding sources are also included in the Feasibility Study.

Black Rock - Riverside GNPA Concept

The City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning initiated a neighborhood-based planning process as part of the city's ongoing Comprehensive Planning efforts. The neighborhood-based planning process, known as the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance (GNPA) seeks to actively involve citizens in the creation of community-based action plans in each of the city's GNPA areas. The Black Rock - Riverside GNPA was created in 2001 to represent the Riverside planning area, which is comprised of the Riverside, Black Rock and West Hertel neighborhoods.

In 2006, the Black Rock - Riverside GNPA prepared an award-winning Concept Plan for Black Rock Canal Park. The park, while new in name, is a synthesis of three, adjacent, waterfront recreational facilities: Cornelius Creek Park, Ontario Street Boat Launch and a section of the Riverwalk multi-use trail. The goals of the Concept Plan are to address the deficiencies in the current design of these facilities, to increase parkland along the river, and to foster usage of the park by a diversity of users.

